

The Couple Who Feeds Hundreds Each Day by Shreya Pareek

He was a photographer with a heart — always caring, compassionate and kind towards those in need. Now his family has chosen to honour his legacy in a unique way.

On a fateful day in August 2011, Nimesh Tanna, a 22-year-old photographer, boarded a crowded local train to make his way to a meeting in Mumbai. He never made it to the meeting or to his home that day. A pole, located dangerously close to the tracks, hit him hard the moment he put his head out of the train. Nimesh fell off the fast moving train and died on the spot.

“We were best friends since childhood. We went to the same school and attended the same college. We even worked together in the same company before he decided to pursue his passion for photography. We had decided to go for a movie that night but I didn’t know Nimesh would never return,” says Kintan Parekh, Nimesh’s friend, with a heavy heart.

It’s been four years and one can still hear the pain in Kintan’s voice. He recalls that day when he received a call from the railway authorities about a dead body lying on the side of the tracks near CST railway station.

“I was with his parents at the time they got the call. They were worried as Nimesh’s phone was not reachable. His father was a heart patient so I didn’t tell him exactly what had happened. I just told him that Nimesh had met with an accident but was fine. But when we reached the accident site, his father broke down. He couldn’t believe what had happened. It was such a tough thing to accept for everyone. We took the dead body home where hundreds of Nimesh’s friends were waiting along with his mother. He was a well-known boy and every one loved him,” recalls Kintan.

Coping with this loss was even more difficult for Mr. Pradeep Tanna and Mrs. Damyanti Tanna, as Nimesh was their only child.

Nimesh Tanna was a passionate photographer with a compassionate soul.

The couple’s life came to a complete halt as they would sit the entire day in front of Nimesh’s photo, remembering him. Barely able to recover from this huge loss, Pradeep faced another setback when he lost the sweet shop he owned in Mulund because his

partners cheated him in the business.

Kintan, who had always been there for the family during their tough times, yet again provided a helping hand. He advised Pradeep to start a new venture and he quit his own family business to support the Tanna family. Kintan, along with Pradeep, started a new sweet shop in Mulund.

The family was finally getting back on its feet and decided to honour their lost son in an extraordinary way.

“Nimesh was always socially inclined. He would help people in need, donate money, do volunteer work — he was very compassionate. His parents thought that starting an NGO under his name would be the perfect way to pay a tribute to their son,” says Kintan.

The Tanna couple registered the Shri Nimesh Tanna Charitable Trust (SNTCT) on January 26, 2013.

SNTCT was started with the goal of providing free tiffin service to the needy.

Nimesh’s parents started a free tiffin service for the needy in his memory.

The Tannas started by making food in their small kitchen for about 30 people. SNTCT now provides lunch to about 100 underprivileged families in Mumbai every day.

It’s been over two years and the Tanna family has not skipped even a single day of their service. They have a new kitchen in a small space near their house in Mulund, where a staff of seven people makes healthy meals for the poor.

To make sure the tiffins reach the beneficiaries on time, the couple has partnered with the famous dabbawalas of Mumbai who do the delivery every day.

“Earlier, it was very challenging to deliver the tiffins on time. Sometimes, uncle and I would personally go to deliver the tiffins but this was not feasible every day since I had my own office then and uncle too had a shop to take care of,” says Kintan.

In time, SNTCT has also started working with a tribal community near Mumbai.

The trust provides food kits to the tribal community around Mumbai.

Since tribals are often disconnected from mainstream society and do not have the means to earn a proper livelihood, SNTCT provides them with ‘food kits.’

The kits contain necessary cooking ingredients like foodgrains, oil, sugar, flour, etc., for the entire month. The Trust distributes these rations to 50 adivasi families on the first Sunday of every month.

In addition, SNTCT also runs a 'Kids Bank' that supplies clothes, toys, books, cycles, etc., to needy children, and has a senior citizens' initiative to supply medicines to the elderly.

SNTCT is run mainly with the money that the Tanna family earns from their sweet shop business in Mulund. However, the family also now gets support from other donors who are impressed with the work that they are doing.

"There couldn't be a better tribute to Nimesh. He was a person with a golden heart and we are trying to keep him alive through the Trust," says Kintan.

Loved by all, Nimesh may not be in this world anymore, but his friends and family are keeping him alive through a great cause. To know more about the Trust contact Kintan at - tfpckintan@gmail.com or check out their website.